

Christmas is just around the corner. Are you ready? If not, let us help!



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

If You Admire the View, You Are a Friend Of Kananaskis



In this month's newsletter...

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The Great Friends of Kananaskis Christmas Gift Guide!

In keeping with the up-coming holiday season, we're going to deviate a bit from our normal newsletter format to bring you a special Christmas edition full of ideas for giving. Way back

in 2012, we published our first Great Friends of Kananaskis Christmas Gift Guide, and while there are still great ideas on that list (which you can see in November edition [here](#)), it's time to update it.

Once again, though, if you've been a volunteer with the Friends of Kananaskis this year, helping build trails and making a difference through out K-Country, then you're on Santa's "good" list. Given the number of hours Friends members put into trails this year, there are lots of folks on the "good" list. Here are some ideas you might want to put on the Christmas list for you or your loved ones.

For years it was fleece, but people are re-discovering the joys of down. All sorts of stores carry down jackets (I was in Winners recently and they had some very stylish ladies down jackets) but for me, there's probably nothing so versatile as the [Patagonia Down Sweater Jacket](#).

Unbelievably light yet super warm, compresses to nothing, available in scads of colours, windproof, ripstop, great pockets, and available for both men and women, it's everything you want in a down jacket for layering. At \$265, it will give decades of service.



Back in [February](#), I wrote about emergency kits you should carry every day you are out on the trail. One item that should be in there is an LED headlamp. You can get them in most any outdoors shop, or even Canadian Tire. Look for one with at least 4 LEDs and put temperature proof lithium batteries in them. [SportChek](#), for instance, carries a nice, bombproof Petzl TIKKA headlamp for less than \$30.



I recommended the idea in the last gift guide, but I found an even better deal for you this time. [Lee Valley](#) has 8x21 pocket binoculars for only \$25. That's the best priced ones I have seen in years. At that price, everyone can have their own.



A good daypack is essential, and a nice thing to ask Santa for. When you look for a backpack, look for the features you want.

Mine's a McKinley Lynx 28, and features a rain cover, a lightweight frame and net suspensions system so my back stays cool and dry, two water bottle pockets, drawcords to carry my hiking poles, and a "trunk" pocket where I keep my extra clothes and survival gear. The frame means it's for hiking and so not good at lugging schoolbooks (the shape is all wrong to carry a computer). The 28-liter capacity is big enough for me when I'm out for a day hike carrying my lunch, or out volunteering carrying cameras, bungies, cables and a propane torch. Daypacks run from \$20 to \$200 and can be found at any outdoor

store.

No matter how many times you go out in the winter, you can always use more base layers (the new term for long underwear). I just found some [Hot Chillys](#) at Winners on sale for \$15 for each of the tops and



bottoms, so it's worth looking there, but even The Bay carries them. In fact, you can go designer and get [Polo Ralph Lauren men's long johns](#) from The Bay for \$36. Because someone could see you in your skinnies, and wouldn't you sooner be seen wearing Ralph Lauren?

A good thing to own for winter hiking – even when “hiking” means walking to work – are [Yaktrax](#) or something of the equivalent. These are studs for your boots, and work very well on icy days. There are lots of different kinds, but the all have similar features: rubber things that wrap around your boots and metal studs or wires on the bottom for traction. I have two pair of Yaktrax imitators, one big set for my Sorrels, and a smaller set for my regular shoes. I found one in a Winners for about \$15, and the other in Canadian Tire for a similar price.



If your loved ones are going to spend time in the back country during any season, safety is paramount. Why not let Santa prove you care about them by getting them a SPOT device? This satellite based communication system calls out "help" when no one else can hear, plus has lots of other functionality. [MEC](#), London Drugs, Best Buy and many others carry SPOT devices for about \$170, and for a 2014 holiday special, you can download a rebate form from the [SPOT website](#) and get 50% of your purchase price back (check the rebate form for the conditions).



It's pricy, but why not consider seeing K-Country in a new way: from a dog sled? There are three companies in the Canmore area now doing sledding in the Spray Lakes area. [Howling Dog Tours](#) sled in the area around Spray West campground, [Snowy Owl](#) are up on the west side of Gap Lake, and [Mad Dogs and Englishmen](#) run along the east shore and down to the south end of the lake. All three offer trips from 1 hour to all day, and Mad Dogs even has an overnight camping adventure. It's not reindeer, but mushing along in a many-dog open sleigh is a whack of fun and a riot



for the kids.

And if being above ground in the cold isn't your bag, why not head underground where it's a consistent 10° C all winter long?

[Canmore Cave Tours](#), operators of Rat's Nest Cave in Grotto Mountain just outside of Canmore, offer cave tours year round. There are two tours available, a 2½ hour tour for \$115 and a 4 hour adventure tour for \$145. Visit Canada's 4th longest cave and see stalactites and other amazing cave features. This is on my bucket list and will be featured in an upcoming newsletter (as soon as I get underground).



You can treat everyone in the family who loves K-Country with gift certificates for a weekend getaway at the [Delta Lodge at Kananaskis](#). A beautiful hotel in a beautiful location. You're just steps from Nakiska, or cross country skiing, or summer hiking, or horseback riding, or tobogganing, and with great restaurants and pubs, too.



Another incredibly romantic place to take your honey is the beautiful, isolated, yet easy to access [Mt. Engadine Lodge](#). Become a super Santa by getting a gift certificate for some time away here. It's a fantastic place to stay in the winter, with cross country skiing and snowshoeing right at the door, and downright spectacular moose watching in the summer. The food is wonderful, including the afternoon tea. And it's only about 40 min. south of Canmore on the Smith Dorien-Spray Trail.



Winter is also a great time to give ice climbing a try. [Yamnuska Mountain Adventures](#) offers a 2-day Ice Climbing Basics school about every second weekend from December to March for \$325. A number of other guides also teach ice climbing in the Canmore and Kananaskis areas, including [Mountain Skills Academy](#), [Canadian Rockies Alpine Guides](#) and [Rockies Ice and Alpine Specialists](#), to name a few.

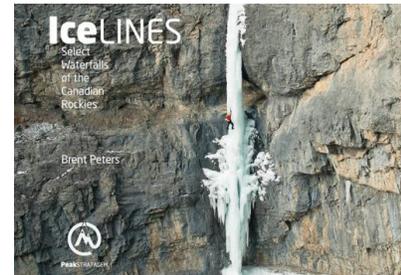


If you're going ice climbing, a GoreTex jacket is a requirement (unless you like being soaked in ice water all day). Ask Santa for the [MEC Monsoon Jacket](#) (available in both ladies and mens) for about \$240. That will keep you nice and dry both winter and summer.

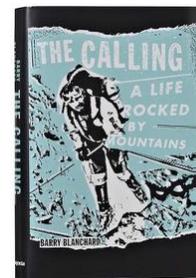


At lower price points, I wouldn't consider ice climbing without a nice set of gaiters. MEC also has some [Kokanee 2 gaiters](#) for \$45 that are also GoreTex. Come to think of it, gaiters are also useful for winter hiking and snowshoeing, which is good because I don't actually ice climb.

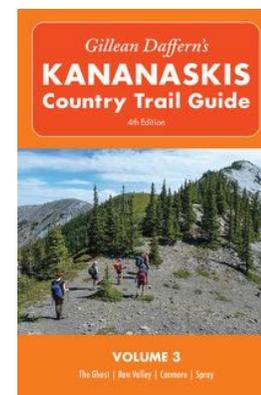
Want to know where to go ice climbing? Try the book "*IceLines – Select Waterfalls of the Canadian Rockies*" by Brent Peters. Only \$23 at [MEC](#). You could try getting a hold of the now out-of-print "*Waterfall Ice: Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*" by Jo Josephson, but last I checked it was a little unreasonably priced at [\\$2,455.66 at Amazon](#)...



There are a few new books out this year that are real "must haves". The first is Barry Blanchard's "*The Calling: A Life Rocked by Mountains*". [Barry](#) is a Canmore-based climbing and mountaineering legend. The book is widely available for about \$25. Rumour has it that Barry is doing a reading and book signing on **Thursday, November 27th at 7 PM at Cafe Books in Canmore**. Why not get it there, meet the legend and get your book autographed, too? THAT will impress Santa.



The second is, of course, Gillean Daffern's "*Kananaskis Country Trails Guide, Volume 3*" (the orange one), which covers the Canmore and northern K-Country area. It's available in lots of book stores and gift shops. For all sorts of confusing reasons, Volume 4 came out last year before Volume 3. I'm particularly fond of Pages 10, 135 and 267 in Volume 3. This book went to press the day before the floods, so has the odd "issue" describing a trail that isn't there any more, but is still the bible of hiking in the area and a requirement for everyone's bookshelf. In fact, why not ask Santa for all 4 of Gillean's books? You can spend the winter (as I did one year) reading them from cover to cover, planning your summer adventures. And what could be a better gift than that?





Red fox. Photo courtesy John Paczkowski, Alberta Parks

News from the Board: Hellos and goodbyes

By Derek Ryder, Chairman

It is with great pleasure that I announce that two long-time Friends members and active trail-diggers have joined the Board.

Born and brought-up in Alberta, **Ed Engstrom** has been a Rocky Mountain enthusiast forever, starting as a child when he nicknamed water as “mountain juice”. This love of the mountains grew to include hiking, downhill skiing, cross country skiing, backcountry skiing, bouldering, rock climbing and mountaineering. After the floods of 2013, Ed decided it was time to give back his efforts to repair the damage. As part of a successful career in IT leadership, Ed is currently an IT management consultant. Ed’s career as a volunteer continues with commitments to the Calgary Stampede and fitness organizations.

Jamie McPhail is an experienced Industrial-Organizational consultant, Quality Improvement leader, and senior manager with domestic and international organizations. He is an inveterate volunteer for community and social agencies, Arts & Culture organizations, and inter-agencies at frontline and Board levels. Passionate for time in the hills, whatever the activity may be. Jamie has also spent a bunch of time underground as an active caver.



Alas, we still have one goodbye, but it is a very positive one. After serving over 4 years on the Board, **Don Cockerton** has decided to step back from his duties, a choice he announced to the Board several months ago. Don's connection to the Friends is a deep one. Don's 35 year career with Parks included extensive time in Planning in Kananaskis Country, and Don facilitated the initiation of the Friends trail care work back



in the 1990's while still with Parks. Don joined the Board when the Friends were struggling and helped the organization re-focus and move forward, including spending 15 months at Chairman. Don has been a great liaison with Alberta Parks staff, and he has been a great source of wisdom to the Board in general and to me in particular. Don was recognized for his contribution at the November Board meeting with a custom made pulaski trophy.

Don is not going away, however. He still has a lot of energy for K-Country, and to continue to help the Friends succeed. In fact, Don will be joining the Friends Advisory Council, as will my former Co-Chair **James Early**, who stepped back from the Board at the end of September. I am excited that both of these committed, knowledgeable and passionate folks will continue to support our organization in ways that work for them.

The Upcoming Winter Speaker Series

The Education and Events subcommittee is working hard on this winter's speaker's series, targeting talks in January, February and March of 2015. Like last year, it will be held at the University of Calgary, and feature renown individuals who will be speaking on topics with a focus on trails in Kananaskis country.

Last year, we had Steven Herrero, speaking on grizzly bears, and Brian Keating, talking about how being out in nature influences health. Stay tuned to our website's



[Upcoming Events](#) page for dates, times, speakers and topics for this season.



Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), who in 2014, made a 4 year commitment to support the Friends in flood recovery efforts.

The Friends are also supported by the [Patagonia stores in Calgary and Banff](#), who are our 2014 Trail Care Program

Title sponsor, and suppliers of high quality gear for the outdoor enthusiast.

There are many ways to express your gratitude for Kananaskis Country and we are always grateful for contributions that help us maintain our programs, operations and help us restore flood damaged trails.

Friends of Kananaskis Country is a registered charity in good standing and we provide charitable receipts for donations over \$20.00. You can reach us directly by mail at the address below, through the [donations link on our website](#), through [ATB Cares](#), or [CanadaHelps](#). Thank you for your support!



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